**How does distance Scouting work?**

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Dear Scouts, PLs, Scouters and Parents

The advent of the Covid-19 Pandemic has seen the shutdown of “traditional” Scouting in South Africa. The Distance Scouting Programmes are designed to allow you to continue with scouting from the “comfort” of your home.

Each week a new programme is sent out. Because the programmes rely on interaction between the patrol and not everyone will be available at the same time, you get a week to complete the programme. Try to do the programme as soon as possible so that people who are relying on you to do your part in the programme can get the benefit of your contribution.

In order to take part in the programme you will need to be part of your patrol’s communication network. WhatsApp works really well, but other platforms can be used too. If you are not part of your patrol’s network, get on it now! If you invite a friend who is not a scout to do the programme, let your PL know and get them added to your network.

Scouts, Parents, PLs and Scouters have different roles to make the programme work. Please read your part below (PLs should read both the “Scout” and the “PL” section).

**SCOUTS**

Each programme is divided into sections, which comprise of one or more items. You should do all the sections in the programme, but you might not be doing all the items in any given section.

If there is a “choice” between items in a section the item will start off in bold, something like: “**If you have completed your Traveller Living Outdoors Theme**”. There will normally be two or three choices. Choose the one that applies to you. For example, in the first programme, under “Thirsty Anyone”, if you have completed your Traveller Living Outdoors Theme, you would make a video on how to make a water filtration device to teach your patrol how to make them. If you haven’t, you would choose the second option and watch the video and then make a filter and post a photo of you drinking your purified muddy water. You would not need to upload a training video.

You can find out what advancement you are on by visiting Scouts.Digital. If you cannot access this, ask your PL or simply look on your shirt as to what your advancement is. (The Living Outdoors Theme badge is a yellow badge with a tent on it!).

A lot of the items for senior scouts involve uploading training videos, as many of your advanced skills involve training younger scouts. If your videos are too large, consider posting them as a YouTube video and then just putting up the link.

Some items are going to rely on your honesty, for example in the second programme younger scouts need to spend a night in their shelter in order to pass the item for “Getting Comfortable”. Please do not upload a video of you snoring all night long, simply upload a photo of you in your shelter and confirm on your Scout’s Honour that you spent the night in your shelter.

Depending on your circumstances you may not be able to do some of the items. For example, due to the lockdown if you stay in a flat or an informal house you will not be able to make a shelter outdoors and sleep in it because you don’t have access to a garden. Feel free to improvise the programme if necessary, just remember to always “Do your Best”. Even if this means you may not get the item signed off, it does mean that you have hopefully acquired the skills necessary to get it signed off quickly when normal scouting resumes.

**PLs**

In addition to completing work as a scout, as a PL you need to drive the entire programme. During World War I many people thought scouting would close down because all the scouters were off fighting in the war. It didn’t, PLs like you ran scout troops in the absence of the scouters and scouting emerged from the War stronger than ever thanks to PLs like you.

The first thing is to lead by example. Be the first to post your inspection item on the group so the patrol can see what they need to do. If you do the programme, your scouts will follow. If you put off doing things until the end of the week, do not be surprised if your patrol does too and runs out of time.

The second thing is to organise the patrol. You should know who needs to do what. For example, work out who in your patrol should be posting videos on your social media group and ask them to do so. If you don’t, nobody will do anything while they wait for someone else to do it. Remember that younger scouts need training on how to do certain things before they do it, so the sooner the training videos come out the better. Leadership is not sitting back doing nothing, it is actively managing your patrol and if you do this your entire patrol will benefit from the Distance Scouting programmes.

The third thing is to encourage your patrol. If someone posts something, acknowledge it. If someone is not doing the programme, contact them and encourage them to take part. If a message on social media doesn’t work, call them. It is amazing what a “real time” call can do that a sms or WhatsApp cannot.

Fourthly, you need to facilitate communications. Some items require a meeting with your patrol, which is difficult given the lock-down. Luckily, with modern technology there are options available to you to do this. Consider the following suggestions sent out by the Regional Commissioner recently:

* [**Skype**](https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/): The trusty standard, now with simple video conferencing
* [**Zoom**](https://zoom.us/signup): Simple video conferencing, offering free conferences with some limits
* [**Microsoft Teams**](https://teams.microsoft.com): Professional conferencing, best if you have a scouts.org.za address
* [**Webex**](https://www.webex.com): Ideal for conferencing with presentations or teaching
* [**WhatsApp**](https://www.whatsapp.com/download/): The standard for messaging and calls on smartphones

Find out what option works for you patrol and get it up and running.

Finally, make sure you mark off on Scouts Digital those items that you feel your Scouts have passed. This will prompt your scouter to co-sign off these items. If you feel you have passed something, tell your scouter so that ScoutsDigital can be updated. If you do the programmes conscientiously your entire patrol should advance.

**PARENTS**

Your job is twofold.

Firstly, please try and facilitate the programme to the best of your ability. The programmes are designed to be run using items that most people should have around the house, but if you don’t have some items help your scouts to improvise. Electronic communication is also key, so please try give your scouts access to electronic devices to allow them to benefit from the programme. If that is a problem let the PL know so that a plan can be made.

You will also notice that some items in the programme require the scout to have a “helper” to complete the item. In doing the inspection item for the second programme, someone has to time the scouts and someone has to help with sit-ups etc. Your help facilitating the programme is hard work, but it is also invaluable.

Secondly, please encourage your scouts to take part in the programmes. We do not know how long normal scouting will be on hold and without your assistance your scouts will stagnate in the programme. A kind word of praise is priceless.

**SCOUTERS**

The programmes will hopefully keep your troop running during the shutdown and will also hopefully keep your troop ticking over.

As always, your job is to ensure the functioning of the patrol system and this is best done by working through the PLs and ensuring that they are properly implementing the programme. You should be on the Patrol communication groups so you can see if your PLs are doing their bit. If you aren’t on the groups get on them. When a PL does something well make sure to recognise him or her for it, even if it is just via a simple private message.

Make sure that your scouts’ hard work is recognised. Mark the work of the patrol and send back feedback on how many points the patrol earned each week. Make sure that you co-sign advancement items that the PL has marked off on Scouts Digital so that scouts can see the benefits of their hard work.

Make sure your PLs are motivated. During World War I the scouts took over many duties of the coast guard, raised funds for recreational huts on the front, acted as messengers for the Ministry of Defence and made the movement strong and resilient. Your scouts and PLs can be just as useful during this time of crisis, make sure you encourage them and mentor them as best you can and your troop will emerge from this stronger than ever before.

Have fun and keep scouting!

**Andrew Campbell, Troop Scouter**